

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

## LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** Kendall-Levine House  
**OWNER:** John J. Davis  
**APPLICANT:** Same as Owner  
**LOCATION:** 2132 Troon Road - River Oaks  
**30-DAY HEARING NOTICE:** N/A

**AGENDA ITEM:** Ic  
**HPO FILE NO:** 07L190  
**DATE ACCEPTED:** Sept-7-2007  
**HAHC HEARING DATE:** Sept-26-2007  
**PC MEETING DATE:** Oct-11-2007

### SITE INFORMATION

Lot 12 and Track 13A, Block 53, River Oaks Section 3, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a two-story, shingle veneered residence.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Kendall-Levine House located at 2132 Troon Road was constructed in 1936-1937 for Joseph S. Kendall, president of Modern Appliances Inc., a distributor of Electrolux gas refrigerators and Chambers gas ranges. The home was later owned for almost sixty years by Max and Marcella "Marty" Levine. Max Levine was, at one time, the president and CEO of Foley's Department Stores. Both Max and Marty were active members of the Houston community for many years, and were well-known for their volunteer and charity work.

The house was designed by Houston architects, Harvin C. Moore and Hermon Lloyd. The body of work created by these architects is substantial, and includes many homes in River Oaks as well as public and commercial buildings. Harvin C. Moore is credited with being one of Houston's earliest preservationists as he helped to found the Harris County Heritage Society and led the effort to preserve the Kellum-Noble House, Houston's oldest structure located on its original site. The Kendall-Levine House qualifies for Landmark Designation under Criteria 1, 3, 4, and 6.

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

The Kendall-Levine House at 2132 Troon Road was designed in 1936 by Houston architects, Harvin C. Moore and Hermon Lloyd, for Joseph S. Kendall, president of Modern Appliances Inc., a distributor of Electrolux gas refrigerators and Chambers gas ranges. Modern Appliances Inc. maintained four stores in the Houston area, with its main office located at 4001 South Main. The Kendalls moved from their previous home at 3250 Locke Lane into the Troon Road home in 1937. Only a few years later, they sold the house and a quick succession of owners, including William S. Athey (an IRS agent), McKay Donkin, and Cyril Birch, owned the house. Finally, in 1946, Max and Marty Levine purchased the home and owned it for the next sixty years.

Max and Marty Levine were active members of the Houston community for many years. Max Levine (1902-1991) was best known for serving as President and CEO of Foley's after the store was purchased by Federated Department Stores in 1945. Levine was born in Boston, where he graduated from Harvard College and Harvard Business School. Max and Marty Levine moved to Houston in 1946 from Akron, Ohio, to run the first downtown Foley's Department Store for Federated Stores. Mr. Levine had joined Foley's in 1945 as vice president and general manager, became president in 1946 and chairman in 1964.

# CITY OF HOUSTON

## Archaeological & Historical Commission

## Planning and Development Department

In 1946, the City Directory lists Mr. Levine as President of Foley Brothers Dry Goods at 1100 Main Street. The new downtown Foley's opened its doors at 1110 Main Street on October 20, 1947. Federated spent \$13 million to build the new store, which was heralded by the press as the nation's "most modern department store."

Max Levine's community involvement was extensive and included serving as: President of the Retail Merchant's Association; on the Boards of the United Way, The Texas Research League, First City Bank, Federal Reserve Bank – Houston, and Regional Federal Reserve Bank Board of Dallas. He also served on the Board of the University of Houston Foundation; the Council on Alcoholism; and the Executive Committee of the Board of the Houston Symphony. On several occasions, Levine was recognized by the Symphony, including having the Concertmaster Chair named in his honor.

Mrs. Levine (1914-2007) was also a vibrant member of the Houston community. She was born in Rockford, Illinois, and graduated from the University of Ohio and Katherine Gibbs Business School in Boston. At the University of Ohio, she was the first female editor of the yearbook. Her obituary describes her as the "consummate volunteer," and she received the Savvy Award in 1993 for her many accomplishments. Mayor Kathy Whitmire decreed Marty Levine Day on September 19, 1985, in recognition of her volunteer achievements.

Marty Levine worked with numerous charities, including Houston Public Television (Channel 8), the Houston Symphony, American Cancer Society, American Red Cross, Family Service Center, Retina Research, and others. She was one of the founders of the Channel 8 tele-auction. The Marty Levine Garden was built in her honor on the grounds of the LeRoy and Lucile Melcher Center, which is the home of television's Channel 8 on the campus of The University of Houston.

Marty Levine, like her husband, loved the arts throughout her life. She was an accomplished musician who played the piano and the saxophone. She was also an avid supporter of the Houston Symphony and the Houston Museum of Fine Arts. Mrs. Levine lived in the home at 2132 Troon until her death on March 24, 2007, at the age of 92.

Harvin C. Moore, a well-known Houston architect, designed the home at 2132 Troon in 1936 in partnership with Hermon Lloyd. An early sketch of the home is located in the Harvin C. Moore papers, which are archived in the Houston Public Library. A 1987 booklet written by Michael Wilson highlights a drawing of the house at 2132 Troon Road. The drawing's caption is titled, "This drawing of an English country house design shows Harvin Moore's ability in working freehand with a grease pencil. He did many such drawing while deciding upon a design with a client."

According to the introduction written by Moore's son Barry, Harvin Moore (1905-1994) was born in Carmona, Texas. His family relocated to Houston while he was a child, and lived in a two story frame house at 1314 Fairview. Moore graduated from Central High School in 1923 and began college at Rice Institute, from which he graduated "with distinction." After a brief stint in medical school, Moore reentered Rice to study architecture and received his B.S. in Architecture in 1930. Because construction was slow due to the Great Depression, Moore teamed up with Hermon Lloyd (1909-1989), another undergraduate in the Rice architecture program, to design party decorations and sets. The two worked well together, and in 1934, they formed the firm of Moore & Lloyd. Their first offices were in the Citizen's State Bank Building downtown, but several years later, they designed and built new offices at 2006 West Alabama, the first architectural office in Houston with central air conditioning. According to Barry Moore, "Moore and Lloyd were soon very popular and very busy. The reputation of the firm rested largely on their works in River Oaks."

During their partnership, Moore and Lloyd designed many commercial, civic and military buildings, including over 84 homes in River Oaks. Although their commercial buildings were typically 'Moderne' in their design, their residential structures were usually more traditional in style. Barry Moore attributes this to the fact that clients wished to appear "progressive in business and traditional in family values."

The catalogue of Moore and Lloyd works put together by Michael Wilson for the Houston Public Library is extensive. A selection of Moore and Lloyd's River Oaks homes includes:

- 3379 Inwood (Hamman home – Designated Landmark);
- 3310 Del Monte Drive (1934) (demolished);
- 2228 Del Monte Drive (1934) (demolished);
- 2133 Pine Valley (1935), "Home of the Month: McCall's";
- 1839 Kirby Drive (1935) (demolished);
- 1927 Bellmeade Road (1935) (demolished), "Architectural Forum: 101 Finest Small Homes";
- 2125 Bellmeade Road (1935);
- 3257 Ella Lee (1935) (demolished);
- 2940 Chevy Chase (1935);
- 1558 Kirby Drive (1935);
- 2148 Looscan Lane (1935);
- 2117 Looscan Lane (1935) (demolished), "Home of the Month: McCall's";
- 2129 Looscan Lane (1936) (demolished);
- 1112 Shepherd Drive (1935);
- 2404 Brentwood Drive (1935);
- 2216 Chilton Road (1936) (demolished), "Home of the Month: McCall's";
- 2137 Chilton Road (1936) (demolished);
- 2132 Troon Road (1936);
- 1801 Sharp Place (1937);
- 3239 Locke Lane (1936);
- 1537 Kirby Drive (1936);
- 2022 Chilton Road (1936) (demolished);
- 2136 Pelham Drive (1936);
- 3215 Ella Lee (1937);
- 2036 Chilton Road (1936) (demolished);
- 3324 Ella Lee Lane (1937) (demolished);
- 3068 Reba (1937);
- 5 Briarwood Court (1937);
- 2440 Inwood Drive (1937);
- 3417 Ella Lee Lane (1938);

- 3412 Piping Rock Lane (1938);
- 7 Briarwood Court (1938);
- 3208 Chevy Chase Drive (1938);
- 1910 Kirby Drive (1938) (demolished);
- 2327 Claremont Lane (1938) (demolished);
- 2057 Claremont Lane (1939);
- 3689 Del Monte Drive (1939) (demolished);
- 3413 Piping Rock Lane (1939);
- 2033 Claremont Lane (1940);
- 1909 Olympia Drive (1939);
- 3610 Meadow Lake Lane (1940) (demolished);
- 3225 Reba Drive (1940);
- 1665 Willowick (1940) (demolished); and
- 3666 Chevy Chase Drive (1940) (demolished).

By the end of the 1930s, Moore and Lloyd began to move in different directions and the firm dissolved before the U. S. entered World War II. After Pearl Harbor, Moore applied to Congressman Albert Thomas to gain entrance to the Naval Officers Candidate School. The Congressman convinced Moore that he would be much more helpful to the government in his capacity as an experienced architect. Thus started a twenty year relationship in which Moore received military commissions for naval bases in Texas, and later, for federal projects in Houston and elsewhere in Texas. During this phase of his career, he also received commissions for churches, small commercial buildings, and industrial buildings.

In 1954, he began a foray into historic preservation by saving the Kellum-Noble house (City of Houston Protected Landmark), which stands on its original site in City Park and which had fallen into disrepair after many years of use as a City of Houston Parks Department facility. Moore helped to found the Harris County Heritage Society with the mission to save the Kellum-Noble house from demolition. According to Barry Moore, "Moore was one of the few practicing architects of the time who did not see a concern with historic preservation as incompatible with an interest in modern architecture. With the Heritage Society, he worked to locate worthy historic structures, raise funds for their restoration, and move them to Sam Houston Park. Moore restored the Nichols-Rice-Cherry House (c.1850) and the San Felipe Cottage, among others, during his years with the Society."

According to Barry Moore, Harvin Moore considered the preservation works among his favorite projects. The other buildings that he particularly liked were: 1537 Kirby (Hamaker House); 3239 Locke Lane (Childress House); Rice Memorial Chapel and Student Center; and the Houston Casket Company (1717 Live Oak).

### **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY:**

The house located at 2132 Troon Road is one of the most recognized homes on the block and is known to many neighbors as the "blue farm house." The house, which is situated on a very large lot, was designed in a New England Colonial style that borrows from the vernacular building traditions of America's northeast during the 17th through early 19th centuries, and which in turn had borrowed heavily from English antecedents. The central portion of the house is two stories tall and clad with a

# CITY OF HOUSTON

## Archaeological & Historical Commission

## Planning and Development Department

shingle veneer. The central two-story portion of the home is intersected by two one-story wings which also feature gabled roofs and shingle cladding. The home's asymmetrical layout and varying heights lends spaciousness to what was traditionally a compact house type. Three rusticated wooden columns support a covered front porch area and the original doorway. The front door is a split or "Dutch" door. Window types utilized include wide ones with six-over-six lights as well as narrow ones with four-over-four lights.

The home was recently purchased by Jay Davis, who is completing a much-needed restoration and renovation. The work on the home will include plumbing and electrical updates, a full renovation of the kitchen and bathrooms, and painting. Davis intends to keep the original floor plan of the home.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Wilson, Michael C. Harvin C. Moore: Houston Architect, Houston Public Library 1987.

Interview with Barry Moore by Kelley Trammell, September, 2006.

Houston Chronicle, "Ex Chief of Foley's Max Levine Dies", July 2, 1991.

Houston Chronicle, Obituary for Max Levine, July 2, 1991.

Houston Chronicle, Obituary for Marcella Levine, March 28, 2007.

Fox, Stephen, Houston Architectural Guide, Second Edition, 1999, p. 20.

*The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by Thomas McWhorter, Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.*

### APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION:

The HAHC and the Planning Commission, in making recommendations with respect to designation, and the City Council, in making a designation, shall consider one or more of the following criteria, as appropriate for the type of designation:

S	NA		S - satisfies	NA - not applicable
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(1) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area possesses character, interest or value as a visible reminder of the development, heritage, and cultural and ethnic diversity of the city, state, or nation (Sec. 33-224(a)(1);		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event (Sec. 33-224(a)(2);		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(3) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is identified with a person who, or group or event that, contributed significantly to the cultural or historical development of the city, state, or nation (Sec. 33-224(a)(3);		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(4) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area exemplify a particular architectural style or building type important to the city (Sec. 33-224(a)(4);		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(5) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area are the best remaining examples of an architectural style or building type in a neighborhood (Sec. 33-224(a)(5);		

# CITY OF HOUSTON

## Archaeological & Historical Commission

## Planning and Development Department

- ☒ ☐ (6) Whether the building, structure, object or site or the buildings, structures, objects or sites within the area are identified as the work of a person or group whose work has influenced the heritage of the city, state, or nation (Sec. 33-224(a)(6));
- ☐ ☒ (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present (Sec. 33-224(a)(7));
- ☐ ☒ (8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride (Sec. 33-224(a)(8)).
- ☐ ☒ (9) If less than 50 years old, or proposed historic district containing a majority of buildings, structures, or objects that are less than 50 years old, whether the building, structure, object, site, or area is of extraordinary importance to the city, state or nation for reasons not based on age (Sec. 33-224(b)).

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Houston Planning Commission accepts the recommendation of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and recommends to City Council the Landmark Designation of the Kendall-Levine House at 2132 Troon Road.

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

SITE LOCATION MAP  
KENDALL-LEVINE HOUSE  
2132 TROON ROAD  
NOT TO SCALE

